

## Free Press Viewpoint

# President down; where's opponent?

The president seems to be down and nearly out, as much of a one-hit wonder as Jimmy Carter three decades ago or George H.W. Bush in the '90s.

But can the Republicans nominate a candidate who will unite the nation and attract enough support from independent voters — who hold the balance in any national election — to make a change in Washington?

And then, with majorities in both houses of Congress and a new person (man or woman) in the White House, can the GOP lead the nation to solving some of our most pressing problems?

All that remains to be seen. In politics as in weather, things can change overnight.

The president clearly is in danger. No one has been re-elected to his office with unemployment over 7 percent since the Great Depression. His administration seems to have stalled and even his vaunted health-care plan seems to be on the rocks.

Republicans don't like his policies, and Democrats increasingly seem to think he's strayed from the true course of liberalism.

Yet all that amounts to just wishful thinking if the opposition can't rally around an electable candidate. And remember, it's not the party hard-core or the "tea party" on the far right that will make the decision. It's those Americans in the vast middle who swing one way or another.

The same people opted for change four years ago and voted for Mr. Obama as George W. Bush wound up a tumultuous eight years. Hardly anyone wanted more of the same.

Now, the economy is in tatters, worse possibly than when the president took office. The "recovery" is as slow as the recession was deep. Unemployment remains above 9 percent. Business coughs and sputters as it tries to get geared up. And after four years, it's hard to keep "blaming Bush."

Then, one of the big credit-rating agencies downgrades the government's standing, something that's never happened. The stock market behaves like a yo-yo, and people are scared.

And scared people don't invest. They don't create jobs and they don't spend money.

By all rights, Mr. Obama should be done.

But so far, the GOP has no one who can stand up and lead the party to victory. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney comes off as competent but uninspiring. Tea party favorite Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota, like her backers, may be too strident to attract independents. And former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin seems to wander without purpose.

It's not that the tea party is wrong, by the way. We owe the movement a great debt for focusing debate on the federal deficit and the national debt. But the voters who swing elections are not that devoted to principle.

What the Republicans need is a leader, a problem solver, someone the nation can believe in, yes, but someone who can knock heads and get things done, dealing with both sides of the aisle.

And so far, we haven't seen him — or her — on the campaign trail.

— Steve Haynes

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# Getting remodel started is the easy part

We bought our home in Oberlin because of the kitchen, but now we'd like to change it.

I guess it's sort of like the play, "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change."

Our kitchen is big and airy, with lots of windows. It's wonderful.

It's also more than 20 years old. It has a low grade of very pretty linoleum and cabinets that have seen better days.

We've had the worst wears and tears on the linoleum patched, but they show up as shiny spots on the floor.

The cabinets are another problem. The fronts are sagging and the wonderful turntable in the bottom of the corner unit broke the second year we lived here. Since then, our condiments have lived first in a cardboard box and, more recently, on a small bakers' rack that was made for plants but was on sale at the end of the summer a few years ago.

So we decided that while mortgage rates are down, we should try to refinance the house and see if we could get enough money to remodel the kitchen.

We're looking at new cabinets, flooring and a bar instead of the glass-topped table we've had in there for many years.

To that end, we visited our friendly neighborhood banker.



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

She worked with us and did a good job, but it took about six months to get everything together so that we could get enough money to do what we wanted.

As the loan process drew to a close, we moved the glass-topped table out of the house and four of its six chairs went with it. It seemed like a good idea to get rid of things when we had the chance and make room for the remodeling, but that was a couple of months ago.

Our spacious, airy kitchen has been especially spacious the last few weeks with a large hole in the middle and a pair of lonely kitchen chairs sitting naked, without any table over them.

We were bad about using the old kitchen table as a junk collector. Now the only things we have to put our bags and boxes on are the leftover chairs, and the cats seem to think that those were made especially for them to sleep

on.

When we come in the house loaded down with groceries, papers from the office or just plain junk from wherever, we have to fight the cats for space to put it down. Then when we need to take off our muddy shoes, we have nothing to sit on, and we don't bend in the middle quite as easily these days as we did when we moved in here 18 years ago.

Still, we have our loan — our payment even went down, would you believe it — and we've ordered the cabinets. We may have our kitchen ready to go sometime this year — or maybe next or next. (There was a fire at the cabinet shop, did you hear? And the floor guy is way behind.)

In the meantime, the floor is getting full of our stuff and the cats are still trying to maintain possession of the only two chairs in the room.

Oh, the joys of remodeling.

But the kitchen is still light and airy — and right now, pretty spacious, too.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of *Nor'West Newspapers*, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at [c.haynes@nwkansas.com](mailto:c.haynes@nwkansas.com)

# Economy troubles worse with red tape

The economic news for July was disheartening. While we can all be glad that nearly 120,000 more Americans are employed, the jobless rate nationally remains at more than nine percent.

The picture is even more disturbing when one examines it closely: According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, "total unemployed, plus all marginally attached workers, plus total employed part time for economic reasons, as a percent of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers" now stands at more than 16 percent.

Things are even worse in some communities. According to a Pew Research Center, African-American unemployment is 16 percent; when black underemployment is factored in, that number rises substantially.

There are blueprints for economic growth readily available to the public and policymakers alike. Some are sounder than others, of course, but the one non-variable that should be incorporated into any serious plan is the unchanging reality of human nature.

In *The Federalist Papers*, James Madison wrote: "As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust: So there are other qualities in human nature, which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence."

In other words, the Founders recognized that man is a fallen being, yet capable of nobility and courage. Thus they inaugurated a new republic based on the premise that people of virtue — people who governed their own individual lives well — could wisely and justly govern themselves collectively.

How does this relate to unemployment and jobs? Human nature does not appreciate manipulation.

When the federal government seeks to micromanage so many facets of American economic life, believing with unjustified confidence that the brilliant and beneficent minds of the central state can best guide the lives of

## Other Opinions

• Robert Schwarzwald  
Family Research Council

the Great Unwashed (that would be us), people react to it negatively. This includes, of course, the owners and investors of companies of all sizes.

That's what has happened under Barack Obama. As one recent study concluded, "The Obama Administration imposed 75 new major regulations from January 2009 to mid-FY 2011, with annual costs of \$38 billion. There were only six major deregulatory actions during that time, with reported savings of just \$1.5 billion. This flood of red tape will undoubtedly persist, as hundreds of new regulations stemming from the vast Dodd-Frank financial regulation law, Obamacare, and the EPA's global warming crusade advance through the regulatory pipeline." ([www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/07/Red-Tape-Rising-A-2011-Mid-Year-Report](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/07/Red-Tape-Rising-A-2011-Mid-Year-Report))

Some regulation is prudent, but excessive regulation is stifling. For example, environmental regulations have contributed to a substantial decline in America's mining industry. The U.S. Geological Survey reports that in 2008, we relied on other countries for 100 percent of 18 of 61 nonfuel mineral commodities and were more than 50 percent reliant on other nations for 44 of 61 minerals.

An analysis by the Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy notes that in total, "Federal regulation is estimated to cost more than \$1 trillion annually." This amounts to roughly seven percent of the total annual U.S. economy.

The result? The high costs of regulation, liti-

gation and politically-based public policy discourage businesses from hiring new people and trying new ventures. Consider the President's attacks this summer on the accelerated depreciation allowance for private jets: It makes for great class warfare rhetoric but would destroy jobs among private aircraft manufacturers.

Prohibitive tax rates discourage job-creators from investing in personnel or providing greater compensation. Intelligent people dislike being hemmed-in by antagonistic, insistent bureaucrats, become increasingly averse to expanding into highly-regulated domains and respond by holding steady or even contracting rather than expanding their companies.

President Obama and his economic team need to adopt the Founders' view of human nature. Otherwise, they will continue their strident efforts to dictate economic policy through a regulatory and tax regime that flattens job creation. That means anemic growth, fewer jobs and bigger government — hardly a formula for economic success.

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## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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